CONFESSION

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Permissu Superiorum

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Approbation

"I have carefully read over this Little Volume for Children and have found nothing whatsoever in it contrary to the doctrine of Holy Faith; but, on the contrary, a great deal to charm, instruct and edify our youthful classes, for whose benefit it has been written."

William Meagher, Vicar General, Dublin, December 14, 1855.

1. THE BOY WHO CAME BACK.

THERE was a good man who had two sons. He took great care of them and was very kind to them. One day he told them that when he was dead each of them should have half of all that he had. The younger son thought that he would not like to wait for his share till his father died. He wished to have it directly, and be his own master and spend it as he liked. So he went one day to his father, and said -- "Please, father, will you give me now what you promised I should have when you are dead?" The father gave him what he asked. A few days after the boy gathered together all he had. He left his father's house, and went abroad into a country far off. There he had no good father to look after him and watch over him. So he soon fell into bad company. He went with them to theatres, and gambling-houses, and dancing-houses, and such like places. His money went very fast, and he had soon spent it all. When he had spent his money, he expected that his companions whom he had treated would help him. But, when they saw that his money was finished, they all left him! He found himself now even without bread to eat; besides, just at this time, a great famine came on the land. He saw that he must either die or work for his living. So he went and hired himself to a certain man to work for him. This man sent him into the country to feed his pigs. But he got very little for his work. He would have been glad to eat even the cabbage-leaves that were given to the pigs. But he was not allowed to eat them. When he saw how hard people were to him, he became very sad and sorrowful. Then he began to think of the happy days of old, when he lived in his father's house, and how kind his father had always been. He remembered also, that in his father's house, even the servants had plenty of bread to eat, whilst he was dying of hunger. It was now he saw how foolish he had been to leave his father. At last he said to himself, I will arise and go back to my father, and say to him, -- "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am not worthy to be called your son any more, only let me be as one of the hired servants in your house." So he rose up and set off on his way back to his father's house.

Now, his father had often grieved about him after he had gone away. His heart was fretting after him, "Oh, if he would come back again," he often said. Many a time he looked out, hoping to see something of him. So it happened that, just at the time when he was coming back, his father who was looking out, saw him while yet he was a long way off. He was sadly grieved to see him looking so pale, and thin, and ill, scarcely covered with rags and without shoes on his feet. His father could not bear the sight any longer. He did not wait till his boy came up to him. He set off running to meet him. As soon as

he came up to him, he was so glad in his heart to see him again that he could not speak a word. He threw his arms round his neck and kissed him. You may think of how ashamed and sorry, the boy felt at that moment for his bad behavior. So he said, directly, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, I am not worthy to be called your son any more." But these words never reached his father's ears. He was so glad to see him again that he neither heard nor understood what his son was saying. He called out to the servants directly and said, "Bring quickly the best dress out of the house, and shoes for his feet, and kill the fatted calf, and get a great feast ready, and let us eat and rejoice, because this my son was dead and is come back to life again, he was lost and is found."

II. WHO IS THE GOOD FATHER?

THAT Good Father is Jesus himself. The boy who left his Father's house is that boy who once went regularly to church on Sundays, but now he comes no more, he has left the church, which is the house of God his Father. What, then, does the boy do on Sundays? He spends his time in gambling, in playing at pitch-and-toss, and in all kinds of bad company. Go and ask him is he happy now as he was in the days when he went to church? He will tell you no, he is not happy. He has never had any real peace of heart since he left God: for how can he have any peace? *"who ever resisted God and had peace?"* -- Job. Besides this, that boy knows well that there is but one step betwixt himself and Hell. A little blood-vessel breaks, or a fever comes; and where is he? -- gone! Where is he gone to -- to Hell for all eternity. But there is one who has not forgotten him, and that is Jesus. When the boys are coming into church on Sundays, Jesus looks down from the altar to see if this boy is among them. When all the boys have come into church, Jesus sees that he is not among them, and his heart is sorrowful.

Poor boy, God is good! He is a very good Father. You have found that there is no one who cares for you and watches over you as God does. Say, then, now, *at this moment,* to yourself -- "I will arise and go back to my Father. Next Sunday I will begin to go to church again." Next Sunday, when you set your foot in the church again, there will be such joy at the altar where the Blessed Sacrament is. If you could only see the face of Jesus, how glad he will look when he sees you coming back to him. He will say to the angels who are round him at the altar -- "Be glad, and rejoice, O my angels, for this my son was lost and is found." While the Holy Mass is going on, the grace of Jesus will come from the altar into your heart, like streams of light come down from the sun. Then you will be saying to yourself -- What a blessed thing it will be for me to go to Confession. This very week I will go to Confession. When you have gone to Confession, and have confessed your sins, the solemn moment of absolution will come, the moment of the forgiveness of your sins. In that moment Jesus will throw his arms around your neck, and give you the kiss of peace, saying -- "This my son was dead, and he is come to life again!" *

* S. Alphonsus Opus Mori, Lin. vi. Tract. iv. No. 459 -- Consuetudinarius qui prima vice suum pravum habitum confitetur bene potest absolvi, etiamsi nulla emendatio praecesserit, modo eam serio proponit.

III. THE GREAT CURE.

JOHN xx. -- *"Whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven."*

Did you ever hear of any body who in a single moment could cure all diseases, and give sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf? Did you ever know of any one who could call the dead out of their graves back to life again?

The Priests of God's Church can do all this for souls at Confession! There souls that were sick with the disease of sin are cured. The eyes that were blind as a stone to the things of God are opened and see. The ears that could not hear even the thunders of God's word get back their hearing. Tongues that have been stiff and dumb for years speak again to God in prayer. At Confession, souls which have been buried for years and years, deep down in the grave of mortal sin, come to life again.

John vi. At Jerusalem there was a pond full of water. It was called the Pool of Bethsaida. Near it there were five places covered over. In these places there were always a great many sick, and blind, and lame, and withered people. They were waiting there till the water moved. At certain times an angel of the Lord came down there, and the water was moved by him. Now, the first sick person who went into the water after it had been moved by the angel was always cured of his sickness. But only the person who went first into the water was cured. No one else was cured except him. It is not so at Confession. Any soul at any hour can be cured of any sickness at Confession.

IV. THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE. *

Is there a sacrament to forgive sins?
Yes.
Which sacrament is it?
The sacrament of Penance.
When you go to Confession is it the Sacrament of Penance?
Yes.
When you go to Confession what do you tell the priest?
I tell him my sins.
When you tell your sins to the priest, what is it called?
It is called *Confession.*
Must you be sorry for your sins?
Yes.
Who is offended by sin?
God.
Why must you be sorry for your sin?
Because sin offends God.
When you are sorry for your sins, what is it called?
It is called *Contrition.*
If you were sorry for your sins, does the priest forgive them?
Yes.
When the priest forgives your sins, what is it called?
It is called *Absolution.*
Does the Priest after Confession give you some prayers to say, or some good work to do for your sins?
Yes.
What is that called?
A Penance.
Has it any other name?
Yes.
What name?
It is called *Satisfaction.*

* "Omnis utriusque sexus *postquam ad annos discretionis* pervenerit peccata confiteatur -- suscipiens reverentur ad minus in Pascha Eucharistiae Sacramentum, nisi forte de consilio proprii sacerdotis ob aliquam rationabilem causam de tempus ab ejus perceptione duxerit abstinenium." -- *Fourth General Council of Lateran*

V. CONTRITION.

CONTRITION is the most important part of this Sacrament. Sin may be forgiven without Confession when Confession is impossible. A dumb man who cannot confess may have his sins forgiven. A dying man who cannot speak may have his sins forgiven. But without Contrition or sorrow for sin God has never forgiven, and never will forgive, any sin, great or little.

WHAT CONTRITION IS.

If you had offended somebody, would you like him to forgive you?
Yes.
If you wanted him to forgive you what would you say to him?
I should say I was sorry for offending him.
Does sin offend God?
Yes.
When you confess your sins, must you be sorry for them?
Yes.
Why you must be sorry for sin?
Because sin offends God.
If you are sorry for your sins, will they be forgiven?
Yes.
If you are not sorry, will your sins be forgiven?
No.
When we are sorry for our sins, what is it called?
Contrition.

VI. THE MAN WHO WAS SAVED BY CONTRITION.

IT happened, about the year 1614, that a prince whose name is not known died in a duel which he fought against some one who had offended him. He died directly after committing a mortal sin. He died without Confession, he had but a single moment before dying to prepare himself for death. In that one moment, however, he prayed to God. There was a holy nun of the order of the Visitation, called Sister Mary Martignat, God let her know that the soul of this prince had been saved. In the last moment of his life he received into his heart the grace of making a true and sincere act of contrition for his sins. He had not lost the faith she says, so he was ready to receive this grace into his heart as a match receives fire. This Act of Contrition saved his soul from Hell. She said that it was a most wonderful thing that God saved him; because, commonly only those who lead a good life are saved. She saw that when he was saved a million other souls were lost: it was not on his own account that God gave him this grace; but on account of that article of the Creed, the *Communion of the Saints*, that is, because others had prayed for him. She saw that the devil fully expected to have his soul, and he was never so disappointed since he was in Hell; she saw this soul in the deepest part of the flames of Purgatory, and would very likely remain there till the day of judgment. It was covered and surrounded by fiery thorns which hung down on all sides of it. -- How good God is, how his ways are above the ways of men. A man commits a murder, they hang him; he may be very sorry for it, no matter, they will not forgive him; they hang him. A man commits the most terrible crimes against God, the man is sorry, God forgives him!

THE GREAT MISTAKE.

A CERTAIN child was told that if it made an Act of Contrition its sins would be forgiven by God. So the child made an Act of Contrition; it said the words of the Act of Contrition, but, while it was saying the words, it did not think at all about what it

was saying. The child finished the Act of Contrition; but, its sins were not forgiven! Why not? Because, while it said the Act of Contrition, it was neither sorry for its sins, nor did it think about not committing them any more.

VII. CONTRITION MUST BE INTERIOR.

IF you only say that you are sorry, and are not really sorry, will your sins be forgiven?
No.

THE TWO KINGS.

THERE were two kings, one was called Saul, the name of the other was David. Both of them had committed great sins. Saul had offered a sacrifice; this was a sin, because Saul was not a priest, and nobody was allowed to offer a sacrifice except a priest. Besides, Saul had taken a great many beasts and cattle which God had forbidden him to take. David, besides other sins, had unjustly taken away the life of an innocent man.

The Prophet Samuel came to Saul and told him of his sins, that he might repent. Now hear what answer Saul made; he said -- *I have sinned because I have broken the commandment of the Lord*, 1 Kings xv. Now, you ask were the sins of Saul forgiven when he said these words? No, the sins of Saul were not forgiven. Why not? Because he said those words only with his lips, he did not say them from his heart, sincerely.

Now, let us see what happened to David. The Prophet Nathan came to David. He reminded David of his sins, that he might repent; what answer did David make? Just the same answer as Saul had made. He said, *I have sinned against the Lord*. 2 Kings xii. Was the sin of David forgiven when he had said these words? Yes. The Prophet said to him *the Lord hath taken away thy sin.* Why was the sin of David forgiven? Because he said the words not only with his lips, but he said them also sincerely from his heart. So you see, when you go to Confession, it makes all the difference *how* you say the Act of Contrition. If you say it from your heart and sincerely, your sins will be forgiven. If you say it with your tongue as a parrot might say it, your sins will not be forgiven.

VIII. CONTRITION MUST BE SUPERNATURAL IN ITS ORIGIN.

If you are not sorry in your heart for your sins, can any one change your heart and make you sorry?
Yes.
Who can change the heart?
God.
But cannot a sinner change his own heart and have true sorrow of himself, without the help of God?
No.
Can a sinner get sorrow from God?
Yes.
How can he get it?
By praying for it.

CAN WE CHANGE OUR OWN HEARTS?

The heart of a sinner cannot be changed except by God. If fire gets hold of a house and begins to burn it, the fire will not stop of itself. If a river is running into the sea, the river will not stop of itself. So, a sinner who is going on the ways of sin will not stop of himself. A man who loves to get drunk will continue to love it. He will get worse. He cannot, himself, change

his own heart and make it hate what he loves. Nobody can change his heart except God. God can and will change the sinner's heart, if he prays earnestly and sincerely, and does his best. God has promised this, and God cannot break his own promise, God has said -- *Ask and it shall be given to you,* Matt. vii. So if we ask for contrition and change of heart, God will give it to us. So the true change of heart which is in Contrition, comes from God and from God only. He who prays for it will get it. He who does not pray for it will not get it? You will not understand why many sinners do not repent. They feel that they cannot change themselves. They cannot of themselves hate a sin which they have committed so often and loved so much. So they give up all thoughts of repentance. A sinner says, "It is of no use for me to try, I cannot change myself." This is true. The sinner cannot change himself. But the sinner forgets that if he begins to pray to God, and goes on praying, God will change his heart for him.

IX. THE BAG OF SERPENTS.

A CERTAIN man used to carry about with him a bag full of poisonous, stinging, deadly serpents. One night he laid the bag of serpents down on the floor. He forgot to fasten it up, and went to bed. During the night all the serpents crept out of the bag. They went and twisted themselves round the man while he was asleep. In the middle of the night the man awoke. He was dreadfully frightened when he found the serpents twisted round his head, and arms, and legs, and feet, and all his body. What was he to do? If he stirred the least, these serpents would bite and sting him. The bite or sting of any one of those serpents was sure to be his death! So he lay as still as if he had been lying in the grave. He called out for somebody to get a pan of warm milk and set it down in the middle of the floor. This was done. The serpents soon smelt the warm milk. First one great serpent untwisted itself from his arm and went to the warm milk. Then another serpent followed, and then another. At last every one of the serpents untwisted itself from the man's body, and he was saved from death!

This man could not get away from the serpents *of himself*. He was obliged to ask somebody to help him. Every mortal sin is a serpent round the soul. The sinner cannot get away from these serpents of himself. But if he prays to God, God will make these serpents go away.

There is some one else to whom the sinner should pray for true Contrition. He should pray to his Blessed Mother Mary, in Heaven. She is called the *Refuge of Sinners.* If a little child wants something, to whom does it go? It goes to its mother. If you want Contrition, pray to your Mother Mary. Never forget to say some Hail Marys before you go to Confession.

X. CONTRITION MUST BE SUPERNATURAL IN ITS MOTIVE.

Why must we be sorry for our sins?
Because we offend God by sin.
Why must we be sorry for offending God?
Because he is so good.
It is well to be sorry for offending God because we deserve to be punished in Hell and to lose Heaven?
Yes.
If we are sorry *only* for the punishment, and not sorry for offending God, will our sins be forgiven?
No.

THE THOUGHTLESS BOY.

A LITTLE boy called Thomas one day played truant. He stopped away from school, and played in the streets. When little boys stop away from school, it generally happens that they are found out. So it was with Thomas. His father found out that he had stopped away from school. About dinner time Thomas came home. As soon as Thomas had come into the house his

father spoke to him. He said, "Thomas, you stopped away from school this morning?" Thomas could not deny it. His father went into the next room. When he came out he had a stick in his hand, and he said, "Thomas, come here." So Thomas came. Then the father said -- "Thomas I must make you remember that it is wrong to stop away from school. It is a sin of disobedience." He told Thomas to stand straight up. Then the stick began to come down on the shoulders of Thomas. First it fell on the right shoulder, then on the left. So the stick went from one shoulder to the other a good many times. Thomas, feeling great pain in his shoulders, began to roar and promise never to do it again. The stick now stopped. The father then said to him -- "Thomas, are you sorry?" "Yes, please, father," Thomas answered, quickly, "I am very sorry," "Tell me," said the father, "why are you sorry?" Before Thomas answered this question, he rubbed his shoulders about and then said, "Please, father, I am sorry for the beating I have had, because it has made my shoulders very sore." "But," said the father, "are you not sorry for *offending God?*" "Oh," answered Thomas, "I never thought about that."

So you must remember that when you make an act of Contrition, if you are not sorry for *offending God*, it is not Contrition at all. Tell me, if you go to a shop with a piece of money which is counterfeit, will the people of that shop take it? No. So, Contrition, which is not for God, will not get pardon of sin.

XI. CONTRITION MUST BE SOVEREIGN.

When we go to Confession must we be sorry for offending God?
Yes.
Must our sorrow for offending God be greater than our sorrow for anything else?
Yes.

THE MISTAKE.

A GIRL once was listening to a sermon. Amongst other things she heard the Priest say, "that if people want to make a good confession they must be more sorry for their sins than for anything else." When the sermon was over the people went away. The girl remained behind. She went to the Priest and said, "Please, Father, I think I made a bad confession." "Why do you think so?" answered the Priest. "I will tell you," said the girl. "You said in your sermon to-day that if we went to make a good confession our sorrow for sin must be greater than our sorrow for anything else. When I went to confession I remember that I did not cry for my sins. But when my poor mother died I remember that I cried very much. So I am afraid that my sorrow for my mother's death was greater than my sorrow for my sins." "Answer me one question," said the Priest. "Tell me, if you could bring your mother back to life again by committing a mortal sin, would you commit a mortal sin?" "On, no," said the girl, "I would not commit a mortal sin for anything." "Then," said the Priest, "do not be afraid. Although you cried for your mother's death and did not cry for your sins, yet you were really in your heart more sorry for your sins than for your mother's death."

XII. CONTRITION MUST BE UNIVERSAL.

WHEN you go to confession must you be sorry for your mortal sins?
Yes.
Must you be sorry for *all* your mortal sins.
Yes.
If you are sorry for all your mortal sins except one, will the sins you are sorry for be forgiven?
No.

THE MAN IN CHAINS.

THERE was a man in prison, chained fast to the wall. There were chains round his arms, and his legs, and feet. He wanted to get away, so he tried to loosen the chains. He worked very hard. At last he got the chains away from his arms. Then he slipped his feet out of the chains. He got his right leg away. But, when he came to work at the chain on his left leg, he found it impossible to get it away. Take notice, it was all the same to him whether he was held fast to the wall by one chain only or by several chains, for he could not get away. In like manner, as long as the devil holds the soul by one mortal sin, the soul cannot get away from him nor have any of its sins forgiven.

XIII. FIRM PURPOSE OF AMENDMENT.

JOHN v. *Sin no more lest some worse thing befall thee.*

If you have offended somebody and mean to offend him again, do you deserve forgiveness?
No!
When you go to Confession, if you mean to commit sin again, will your sins be forgiven?
No!
When you are getting ready for Confession, must you say from your heart -- "My God, with your help, I will not commit sin again?"
Yes.
When you say this, what is it called?
A firm purpose of amendment.

Of all things in Contrition, the firm purpose of amendment is the greatest. It is a sign, and the great sign of true Contrition. A person, after Confession, comes and says, I should like to know if, when I went to Confession, I had true Contrition, if I was really sorry for my sins? I answer that question very easily. I say to him -- since you went to Confession, did you commit any more the sins you told in Confession? The person answers, no, I did not. Then, I say, you may be sure you had true Contrition. Smoke coming out of a chimney is a sure sign of a fire. Not committing again the sin we confessed is a sure sign of Contrition.

WHAT WE MUST DO NOT TO COMMIT SIN AGAIN.

1. TEMPTATIONS FROM OURSELVES.

THERE are some sins people commit when they are alone by themselves, for example, some sins of impurity. You shall hear what you must do, that you may not commit these sins again. 1. When you are at Confession, ask the Priest what you must do. Whatever he tells you to do, do it most carefully. 2. Go very often to Confession and Communion. 3. If you have sincere wish not to fall into the sin any more, and yet through weakness you fail even many times -- *do not be discouraged.* Rise up out of it again directly, make an act of Contrition, and go and confess it.

A man had a great sickness. He got better. Still he was very weak. Walking along the road he fell down in the mud, through weakness. What did he do? Did he stop lying in the mud? Did he say, it is of no use trying to walk, I am so weak, I will stop where I am lying in the mud? No, he said, I will try again to walk. So he got up directly. He fell down many times more. But he always had patience, and got up again. Every day he got stronger. At last he was able to walk without falling down. Let the sinner who falls into sin through weakness do in like manner.

2. TEMPTATIONS FROM OTHERS.

MOST frequently people commit the same sins again, because they go back to the same bad company which tempted them before, or they go back to the same places where they committed sin before, such as public-houses, dancing-houses, theatres, etc.

THE GREAT SECRET.

HEAR the greatest secret you ever heard in your life. The secret is about what you must do not to fall again into the sins which you fell into before Confession. This, then, is the secret -- *keep away* -- keep away -- keep away from the bad company; keep away from the places where you committed that sin before! If you want a dog not to bite you, what must you do? Keep away from the dog. If you want not to catch a fever, what must you do? Keep away from the place where the fever is. If you want not to commit a sin again, what must you do? Keep away from those persons and places where you were tempted before. Remember! *the burnt child keeps away from the fire.*

XIV. EXCUSES.

BUT you say, "Oh, you do not understand me. I am quite different now since I went to Confession. I would not commit the sin again for anything. Trust me. If I go to the public-house, I will not get drunk again. If I go into the company of that person who tempted me before, I will not commit the same sin again. Besides, he has been to Confession himself. He is so good now."

Hear the answer to all this. You say you will go back into his company, but you will not commit sin! This is untrue, it is false. If you go back you will most certainly commit the sin again. You know that if you go back, there is at least danger of sin. You do not deny this? You only say that you will go where there is danger of sin, but you will not commit sin. Do you know what God says? He says, *He that loveth the danger shall perish in it*, Eccus. iii. Do you not know that if you put the straw to the fire, it burns. If you put your hand into the dog's mouth, the dog bites you. Do you not know, then, that if you go again into bad company you will become bad yourself. You say that the person who tempted you is becoming now like an angel, he is so good. Hear this -- perhaps he is good like an angel, but if you go into his company again, he will soon become like a devil.

But you say that if you go into the danger of sin, God will help you and keep you from sin. Where did you learn this? For God himself says he will not help you -- he says that he will let you perish. Hear it again -- *He that loveth the danger shall perish in it.* God will not do for you what you can do for yourself. God has given you feet to walk with. If you do not choose to use your feet to walk, but want to fly, God will not help you to fly. You can avoid sin by keeping out of bad company, God will not help you to avoid sin. From the beginning of the world till now God has never once helped any one who went willfully in the danger of sin.

XV. THE BOY WHO COMMITTED SIN AGAIN.

THERE was a boy who had been very wicked. It happened that there was a Mission given in the town where he lived. One night during the mission he went into the church. He stood near the platform where the missioner was preaching. He felt a struggle in his heart during the sermon. While the words of the missioner sounded in his ears the grace of God came into his heart. The struggle was over; he was converted. The tears were running down from his eyes. He was saying to himself, "I never thought about these things before. I will change my life." He went home and asked his father for some pens, and ink, and paper. He shut himself up in a room alone. He got ready for Confession. His tears of repentance fell on the paper

where his sins were written, and wet it. He folded up this Paper, put it in his pocket, and set off to the church to make his Confession, but never reached the church!

As he went along the street it happened that he lifted up his eyes and saw a certain house. In that house there was living one who had often led him into sin before. Now he was in danger! The devil had been all along watching this boy. He was at his side while he was getting ready for confession, and he went through the street. Now was the Devil's moment, when the boy had his eyes fixed on that house. The devil put a temptation into his heart. The temptation was this -- that he should go into that house and commit the sin once more, only once more. The Priest would forgive this sin along with the others. What, then, did the boy do when he saw the house and felt the temptation? Did he fly away? No. Did he say *Jesus and Mary help me?* No. If he had done so God would have helped him. He stood there with his eyes fixed on the house and allowed the temptation to keep hold of his heart. At last he said, yes, I will go in. He then went into the house and committed a mortal sin. After this he said to himself, I think I will not go to Confession, to-night. I will go back home. He went to the street door, opened it and looked out. It was dark, he could see nothing; all was quiet. Still, death was lying for him at that door. Near the door on the outside a man was standing with his hand stretched out. In his hand there was something bright and glittering. It was a long sharp knife. That man had long hated the boy and had made up his mind to kill him. He knew that the boy was in the house and he was watching for him to come out. The boy saw neither the man nor the knife. Now, he thought he would set off for home. He put his foot out of the house. Before he had time to set it down on the ground the knife had gone through his heart. He screamed out and fell down dead at the door. His soul went straight to Hell. So his soul was lying in the flames of hell, and his dead body was lying in the street, with the Confession paper in his pocket!

THREE THINGS TO REMEMBER.

1st. This boy did not go into temptation knowingly and willingly, for he never thought about the house when he set off. Yet, he fell into sin. You say that you will go into temptation knowingly and willingly, and yet will not fall into sin -- what nonsense!

2nd. When his eyes first saw the house of temptation he did not fly away, he did not pray, he did not say *Jesus and Mary help me.* If he had prayed, God would have helped him. *Pray lest you enter into temptation,* Matt. xi. 26.

3rd. Good Christians should always be thinking beforehand, if they are likely to meet with any temptations that they may avoid it. *Forewarned -- forearmed.* If he had thought beforehand, he would have remembered that the house of temptation was in that street, and he would have gone by another street. But the other street was a long way round. No matter, it is better to go a long way round than to go by a short way to hell. *Watch lest you enter into temptation,* Matt. xi. 26.

XVI. THE DYING ROBBER, OR CONTRITION.

IN the time of Emperor Marian, there was a fierce and cruel robber living in Thrace. He was lying in a hospital. He was dying. What happens very seldom happened to him. A little before he died he began to repent of his sins. He made a most sincere Act of Contrition. He cried much for his sins that his pocket-handkerchief was as wet with his tears as if it had been steeped in water.

When the robber was dead a very holy man, the doctor of the hospital, had a vision. He saw on one side of the dead robber many devils with papers in their hands, on which the sins of the robber were written. On the other side he saw two angels shining with light. A pair of scales was brought. The devils put into the scale the papers of sins, and this scale sunk down with the weight of sins laid upon it. The other scale went up. The Angels said to one another, "What can we put into the

empty scale to make it weigh more than the scale in which his sins are? He has only just repented of his robberies. How can we hope to find anything good done by him. However, let us try." They searched about and found the pocket-handkerchief wet with tears of repentance. They said "Let us put this handkerchief into the empty scale, and perhaps God will add to it the weight of his mercy." They did so. Behold, the empty scale went down and the tears were found to weigh more than the sins. So it was known that God had pardoned the man's sins because he had made a sincere Act of Contrition. *

* St. Alphonsus Homo, Ap. Tract Ult. No. 38. Oportet curari ut pueri eliciant actum doloris necessarium ad suscipiendam absolutionem, modo respectu ipsorum magis proprio. *See Blessed Leonard's Act of Contrition* -- "O my God, I am very sorry that I have sinned against Thee, because Thou art so good, and I will not sin again."

XVII. CONFESSION.

WHEN people are sick do they like to be cured? Yes.
Whom do they go to get cured?
To the doctor.
Why do they go to the doctor?
Because he can cure them.
When a sinner wants to have his sins forgiven, whom does he go to?
He goes to the Priest.
Why does he go to the Priest?
Because the Priest can forgive sins.
Who says the Priest can forgive sins?
Jesus Christ says so.
What did Jesus Christ say to the Priests?
He said -- *whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them.* -- John xx.
When a sinner goes to the Priest for forgiveness, what does he tell the Priest?
He tells his sins.
When he tells the sins to the Priest what is it called?
It is called *Confession.*
Can you tell your sins at Confession, if you do not remember them?
No.
Then, what must you do before you go to Confession?
I must try to remember my sins.
When you try to remember your sins before Confession, what is it called?
Examination of Conscience.

WHAT SINS WE MUST CONFESS.

Sins before Baptism. -- Are we obliged to confess the sins committed before Baptism?
No.
Why not?
Because sins committed before Baptism are not forgiven by the sacrament of Penance.
What sacrament forgives them?
The sacrament of Baptism.

Then, what sins must you confess?
The sins committed after Baptism.
Mortal sins. -- Are you obliged to confess *all* the mortal sins you remember?
Yes.
Must we confess how many times we committed each mortal sin?
Yes.
But, if we cannot remember how many times, what must we do?
We must try to remember how many times we did it each day, or week, or month, or year.
Venial Sins. -- Are you obliged to confess your venial sins as you are obliged to confess mortal sins.
No.
Is it good to confess venial sins?
Yes.
Concealment of Sins. -- If you remember a mortal sin must you confess it?
Yes.
If you do not confess a mortal sin because you are afraid or ashamed, will it be forgiven?
No.
Will the other sins you tell in that Confession be forgiven?
No.
Why will not the other sins be forgiven?
Because it is a bad Confession.
If a person has wilfully concealed a mortal sin in confession, can he get it forgiven?
Yes.
How can he get it forgiven?
By confessing it.
Must he confess that he concealed it?
Yes.
Must he tell all the sins of that Confession over again?
Yes.
Why?
Because they were not forgiven.
If a person is afraid to tell his sins at Confession, what should he say to the Priest?
He should say -- *Please, Father, help me to tell my sins, I am afraid.*
Will the Priest be glad to help you?
Yes.
Sins forgotten. -- Is concealing a sin in Confession the same as forgetting it?
No.
If you conceal a mortal sin, does it make the Confession bad?
Yes.
If you forget a mortal sin, does it make the Confession bad?
No.
Is the sin you forgot forgiven along with the others?
Yes.
Why does God forgive it?

Because he knows that I am sorry for it along with the other sins.
If you remember it afterwards, must you confess it?
Yes.
Why must we confess a mortal sin, after it is forgiven?
Because we are obliged to *confess all our mortal sins*.
When must we confess it?
At the next Confession.
Matter for the Sacrament. -- Must you always be sorry for your sins before they can be forgiven?
Yes.
If you have only venial sins to confess, must you be sorry for them?
Yes.
If you are not sorry enough for your venial sins, what must you confess?
I must confess a mortal sin.
But how can you confess a mortal sin, when you have not committed one since your last Confession?
I must confess over again some mortal sin which I confessed before my last Confession.

XVIII. FAULTS IN MAKING A CONFESSION.

1. -- Children often talk with one another while they are getting ready for Confession.
2. -- Some children are in a hurry to get to Confession, and do not wait till their turn comes.
3. -- Some are very slow in confessing their sins. They tell one sin, then a long stop -- a second sin, then another long stop -- and so on. Thus they make the Priest lose much time.
4. -- Sometimes people confess their good works instead of confessing their sins.
5. -- Some people confess other people's sins instead of confessing their own sins. There was a woman who told her husband's sins instead of telling her own sins. To teach her a lesson the Priest said to her, "For your own sins you will say one Hail Mary, but for the sins of your husband you will fast on bread and water for a month!"
6. -- Some people waste a good deal of time by saying many useless words, and telling long histories. Instead of saying -- I stole such a thing, they will tell the name of every street they went through on their road, and such like useless things.
7. -- Others will say -- "I stole" -- but they do not tell what they stole; or, "I broke the commandments," but they do not say which commandment they broke.
8. -- Some confess only part, sometimes the least part, of a sin. A person says -- "I stole a bridle" -- then he stops. I ask him did he steal anything else? -- "O, yes," he says, "I stole the horse along with the bridle."
9. -- Some do not try to tell the number of their mortal sins, not even whether they were often or seldom.
10. -- There are others who, when the Priest is speaking to them and giving them good advice, do not attend to him, but are thinking whether they have any more sins to confess, and they do the same when they are even making the Act of Contrition!
11. -- Some, when they are asked, if they have any more sins to confess, answer, "no more at present." They seem to think that they are obliged to divide their Confession into two halves, one-half this week and one-half next week!
12. -- Some, instead of accusing, *excuse* themselves. They say, "I committed such a sin, but somebody put me up to it; or I cursed, but they took the curse out of me; or I said angry words, but could not help it."
13. -- Sometimes, when there is a real excuse, which ought to be told, people will not tell it. They say, "I lost Mass on Sunday," they leave out -- "because I was sick;" or, "I ate meat on Friday" -- leaving out -- "because I forgot it was Friday."
14. -- Some people, being asked if they will keep from sin for the time to come, answer, "Yes, *if I am able."* They should answer, "Yes, with God's help, I will."

15. -- Some seem to think that they must always be running back to the Priest for every little thing they forgot in Confession.
16. -- Children sometimes forget to do their penance. But, the worst thing of all is, the concealment of sins, through fear or shame.

XIX. SOME WHO CONCEALED SIN IN CONFESSION.

THERE was a girl, living near Brussels, who went to confession and Holy Communion every month. During her last illness, one day, she remained for some time with her eyes shut, lost, as it seemed, in deep thought. After a while she opened her eyes again, and sent for her sister. When her sister came, she said to her sister, "I am lost forever!" "How foolish," answered her sister, "it is for you to say so; you are dreaming." "No," said the dying girl, "I am not dreaming; I have just seen it." "Seen what?" said the sister. "I have just seed the very place in Hell which has been got ready for me." Her sister then ran out of the room to fetch the Priest. In a short time the Priest came. He said, "Well, my child, what is the matter?" "I am lost," she answered, "for ever. I have just seen the place in Hell which has been got ready for me. I committed some sins when I was little, and I was always frightened to tell them in Confession." Then, in the presence of the Priest and of others in the room, she mentioned what the sins were. "Now," said the Priest, "I know what your sins were. You have only to accuse yourself of them in Confession and they will be forgiven." Her only answer was -- "I am lost forever." "But," said the Priest, "if you ask God to have mercy on you, he will forgive your sins." "I know he will;" the girl said, "but I have abused his mercy so often that I will not ask it any more." The Priest staid there three days and three nights, trying to persuade the girl to confess her sins. It was of no use. She died with these words on her lips -- "I am lost forever. I have seen the place in Hell which has been got ready for me!"

A child once went to the altar to receive Holy Communion. When the child was receiving the Holy Communion, nobody could see any difference betwixt it and the other children. When it had received Holy Communion it came back from the altar, and knelt down in its place. After kneeling there for a few moments, it fell down on the floor. Some people came to raise it up from the floor, but they found that its eyes were shut and it could not speak. They carried the poor child out of the church, and took it to a house that was near. The doctor was sent for, and he came and looked at the child, but he could not tell what was the matter with it. When the Holy Mass was finished, the Priest went over to the house where the child was. He looked into its pale face and spoke to it. But the child made no answer, its eyes were still shut, and it seemed to have no sense. The Priest stood there wondering what could be the matter with the child. All at once the child opened its eyes and said the words, "I made a bad Communion this morning. When I went to Confession, there was a great sin which I was frightened to tell, and I would not tell it." As soon as the child had said these words, it turned round and died. Then, for the love of Jesus, tell your sins in Confession. The Priest is not glad of sin, but he is glad to hear you tell your sins. If you will not tell your sins now, you will have to tell them before all the world at the day of judgment. If you will tell them now they will be forgiven; but if you tell them only at the day of judgment, they will not be forgiven. When the devil tempts you not to tell your sins, say, "My God, help me to tell my sins, because the devil is tempting me not to tell them." If you are frightened to tell your sins when you are making your Confession, say to the Priest, *"Father, help me to tell my sins, because I feel afraid."* Remember -- To forget a sin is no harm, only tell it afterwards when you remember it. But to remember a mortal sin at Confession and then not to tell it, that is a terrible thing.

XX. WANT OF HOPE AND CONFIDENCE, OR THE MAN WHO HANGED HIMSELF.

JUDAS was one of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ. He committed a very great sin. He sold Jesus Christ to the Jews for thirty pieces of silver. But repentance came into his heart. When he heard that the Jews were going to crucify Jesus, he repented. He was very sorry for his sin. He wished with all his heart that he had not done it. He would not do it again for

anything. With his heart full of sorrow, he walked to the Temple, and went in. The Temple was full of people and of priests. He went into the midst of them. They all looked at him, for they saw that he had something to say. He felt very much ashamed, but he did not mind the shame. He confessed his sin, aloud in the hearing of all the priests and the people. He said, *I have sinned in betraying innocent blood!* This was not all. He knew that he had done wrong to receive the thirty pieces of silver. So he gave all this money back again. What a good Confession this seemed to be. Was it, then, a good Confession? No. Judas walked out of the Temple. He went down into the valley of Josaphat. There he hanged himself on a tree, and while his dead body hung there, his bowels gushed out, and it became known to all the people. Why, then, did Judas make a bad Confession? He had everything wanted for a good Confession except one thing, which looks very little, but is very great. He had not *hope*. He had no hope, no confidence that God would pardon him, although God would have been very glad to pardon him. Then, before the children go to Confession, after the Act of Contrition, they should be sure to make an Act of Hope. They might say, *My dear Jesus, I hope in you. I believe, I am sure, you will forgive my sins, because you died for the forgiveness of them.*

XXI. THE WORDS OF JESUS TO THE SINNER.

"I AM your Creator," Jesus says to the sinner; "you are mine, shall I not take care of my own. I died once on a cross to save you. And now, when I am able to save you, do you think I will refuse to save you? I am your brother; shall I not do what is good for my own brother? If you do not know that I love you, you do not understand me. Did I not let men pierce me and scourge me because I loved you? Was I ever seen to despise him who prayed to me? Was it ever known that I turned away from him who sought me? You forget that I seek even those who do not seek me. No, poor sinner, I am the best friend you have in the world. You owe a great debt to God for your sins, but I have promised to pay it. Trust me, hope in me, and your sins shall be forgiven."

XXII. ABSOLUTION.

JOHN XX. Jesus said to his disciples -- *As the Father hath sent me, so I also send you.* When he had said this he breathed on them, and said, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose sins ye shall forgiven they are forgiven them.* So the Priests of God's Church can forgive sins. These are the words of absolution which forgive sins, and are said by the Priest at Confession -- "*By the authority of Jesus Christ, I absolve thee from thy sins, in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. -- Amen.*"

A NEW CREATION.

2 Cor. v. *If any be in Christ a new creature, the old things are passed away, behold all things are new.*

At Confession there is a new creation like the creation of the Heavens and the earth, but more wonderful.

In the beginning God created Heaven and Earth. The earth was then empty of everything. Darkness was on the face of the deep waters. It was such a darkness as we never see. Not a single ray of light was in the whole universe. It was like a solid, dead darkness. Nothing then was heard but the rushing of the waters and the howling of the winds.

The earth empty, in darkness and disorder, was a picture of a soul in a mortal sin. The soul in mortal sin is empty and lonesome, like the earth was. It was empty of God. Oh, the deep, deep emptiness of a soul where God is not! Instead of God there is darkness in the soul. It is not darkness of a deep pit, nor the darkness which presses round a dead body in the grave. It is the darkness of Hell. But go and listen to that soul. You will hear the torrents of temptation rushing into it like great roaring rivers. You will hear in it the wild howlings of its passions, of anger and bad desires.

The Spirit of God moved over the dark waters at the Creation. The sinner has gone to Confession, and the grace of the

Spirit of God is moving his soul. Faith and Hope of pardon are stirred up in him. He begins to love God and hate his sins.

When the Spirit of God had moved over the waters of the earth, God said, *Let light be made.* Then light burst forth into the great darkness and shone on the skies and the earth. The Priest has said the words of absolution. The light of God bursts out in that soul, shining in it as it shines around the throne of God in Heaven.

When God had created light on the earth, he filled it with beautiful flowers of every form and colour, and with the richest fruits. But those flowers faded away, the fruits rotted on the trees at the end of autumn. But at Confession God creates in the soul flowers of virtues which will never fade, and fruits of good works which will never drop off, but will go with the soul into Heaven. So, at Confession the soul becomes like a paradise in which God delights to be with the children of men.

XXIII. THE OLD ROOT OF A TREE; OR, THE DEVILS.

A TRAVELLER found on his road the root of an old tree. He struck the root with his stick. As soon as the root had been struck hundreds of thousands of frightful black insects came out of the old root and went away! What was it that made those insects go away? It was the little noise of the stick striking on the wood over their heads that frightened them and made them go away.

The sinner has begun his Confession. The devils are still dwelling in his soul, like the insects in the old root. Their ugly shapes are feeding on it, as worms feed on the rotten flesh of a dead body in the church-yard. They stick to the soul like leeches, drawing its life away. But what is the matter? the devils have looked up in fear and trembling! The words of absolution are coming near them. The sound of those words come nearer now. The words of absolution have sounded in the soul. In the ears of the devils the words of absolution sound louder and more dreadful than ten thousand thunders. In haste they dash themselves out of the soul. They do not stop till they have buried in the deepest of Hell, and hid themselves from the sound of words so terrible to them.

CHAINS BROKEN.

THE sinner has not yet received Absolution. His soul is still lying in chains -- the chains of mortal sin. They are great heavy clanking chains. They are strong as the gates of Hell. Those chains go into the soul. They have eaten their way into the very inward spirit. Corruption and rottenness have grown up from the soul into the links of those chains and made them one thing with itself. Those chains go round the soul and into every part of it. The soul looks as if it was buried from the sight in those chains. Who can break those terrible chains in pieces? No man, no spirit, no devil, no angel could break them. All men and angels and devils together, could not break the least little ring of those chains. Poor soul! there is a God above *who heareth the groans of them that are in fetters.* Ps. 101. There is a God who is able to break those chains, who wants to break them if you only want it yourself. And, since you have come to Confession, God will break those chains. But, wait a little. The Priest is saying the words of absolution. Those words of themselves could do nothing. But there is the endless force and Almighty power of the Blood of Jesus in those words. Another moment! -- the words of absolution have struck the chains off the sinner like a flash of lightning. Those chains are snapped and broken in pieces as if they were but a bit of thread. The sinner is free! Ps. 135. *With a mighty hand and an outstretched arm God has burst the iron bars.*

XXIV. RESURRECTION.

JOHN V. *The hour cometh and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the son of God, and they that hear shall live.* Lazarus was dead, his dead body had been lying in the grave four days. Jesus came there and stood beside the grave. He cried out with a loud voice, *Lazarus, come forth.* The voice of Jesus sounded in the ears of that body which was cold and

stiff in death. Presently he that had been dead came forth! Let us see how it is with a soul lying dead in the grave of mortal sin. The words of absolution have not yet been said over that soul; it is still lying in the grave, cold and stiff in death. But life is not far off; the Priest has begun to say the words of absolution, already the light of life comes on the dead soul. But how? As yet only like the flash of a candle on the pale face of a dead body. The Priest is breathing the words of absolution, in the name and by the power of the Son of God. Still, that soul lies cold and stiff in death. The words of absolution go on, still there is no sign of life in the soul. The angels are crowded round from above and on all sides to see the great, great wonder that is going to be, *the resurrection of a soul from death to life.* So men would crowd round a grave in the church-yard where a dead body was going to be raised to life. The words of absolution are nearly finished. The Priest has said, *By the authority of Jesus Christ -- I absolve thee* -- (only one more word is wanting, it comes,) *from thy sins*. It is done! in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, that soul is risen to life! the breath of life has been breathed into it, and now it is a *living soul!* Well may the angels come in crowds to see such a sight. They know that to raise a dead body to life costs God nothing. But to raise a dead soul to life, cost God thirty-three years of pain and labour.

XXV. GOOD IN THE SOUL.

WHAT are they doing in Heaven during the sinner's Confession, where there is joy over every sinner that does Penance?

God in Heaven is looking at the sinner on his knees making his Confession. And now listen, for God is speaking to the angels, "My dear angels," God says, "I have tidings of great joy to tell you. This day another name will be written in Heaven. See the poor sinner is on his knees in the church making his Confession. The moment of his absolution is at hand. It is my intention to go down myself and dwell in his soul. I want you to make that soul a fit dwelling-place for the Majesty of God. You will clothe that soul in garments of glittering whiteness, which is *the justification of the Saints*, Apoc. xix. Carry, therefore, from Heaven a most beautiful, precious robe for that soul." Now the angels are going down to the earth carrying that beautiful dress of *Divine Grace* for the happy soul. That dress is whiter than snow, brighter than the sun, richer than gold, or silver, or precious stones. Already the Priest has begun to breathe into that soul the words of absolution. The angels wait in silence. The words of absolution are finished. The angels are clothing the soul with the beautiful robe of Divine Grace.

How beautiful the soul is! Solomon in all his glory was not clothed as that soul is, Ps. 110. Glory and riches are in his house. But now God himself in his three Divine Persons is coming down from Heaven to that soul; *we will come to him and make our abode with him*; John xv. When God comes past the sun, it does not stop to wonder, for it knows not that the Creator is going past. When God comes near the earth, the trees do not bend down to the ground for they do not know that the Majesty of God is near. And now the Glory of God is in that soul, Ps. 45. *God is in the midst thereof.* It is the same God who came down on Mount Sinai and the Jews were told not to go near the mountain lest they should die, if they went so near to God. And now, God is in that soul. He speaks his first word, he says, *this is my beloved son,* and he gives the kiss of peace to the happy soul.

But God has not come from Heaven with empty hands. He has brought with him most precious and beautiful presents for the soul, such as no eye hath seen, no ear heard of. See, the virtues of God and the seven-fold gift of the Holy Ghost, are glittering in that soul like the stars in the skies. God speaks again, "My son," he says, "be of good heart your sins are forgiven by absolution. You may thank Jesus for his blessed grace, because he bought it for you with his precious blood. There was a decree against you which condemned you to Hell. But know that in this very hour the hand-writing of that decree has been blotted out. And now, besides all the gifts you have received, I give you another excellent gift on account of absolution, that gift is *Sacramental Grace*, that is, I make you a solemn promise, and *I will be mindful forever of my covenant*; Ps. 110. I promise that, whenever you are tempted to commit sin again, if you pray to me I will hear you, and the

grace of the Sacrament of Penance shall keep you from sin, *so you are girt with strength that your ways may be blameless,* Ps. 17. And now you are again the heir of the kingdom of Heaven. Be faithful to me until death and you shall receive the crown of life."

XXVI. THE ANGELS.

Ps. 33. The *Angel of the Lord shall encamp round about them that fear him and shall deliver them.* Now God speaks to the angels who are standing round in joy and wonder, "My dear angels," God says, "I give you charge over this soul, to each of you I give a sword of flaming fire turning every way, as I gave the angel in Paradise. Guard this soul and keep it from the evil spirits, for they will seek to take away the heavenly life it has now received."

To the Angel Guardian of the soul, God says: "Dear angel, rejoice because this soul over which you watch, was dead and is now living again. Feed it daily with holy thoughts and the lights of Heaven. Till now its works have been dead works. *But now it shall be like a tree planted near the running waters which shall bring forth its fruit in due season*, Ps. 1. For after this every work will be a living work. Therefore take into your hand the Book of Life. Go along with this my son in all his ways, whatsoever he shall do in thoughts, word, and work, write it down on the pages of the Book of Life. When the short days of his earthly life are finished, and when, after death, he shall stand before me for judgment, I will give him a reward in Heaven exceeding great for every thought, word, and action I shall find written in that book.

There is joy in Heaven above over this soul which has done penance. That joy goes far and wide through Heaven; it is endless, like Heaven itself; all the countless millions of angels are rejoicing over that soul which was dead and is come to life again. They look at the soul in wonder. *Who is it, they say, that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army*, Cant. When we see a child coming out from Confession, how little we think of the wonderful things that have been done in its soul!

XXVII. PENANCE; OR SATISFACTION. *

IF a child has done wrong, does it deserve to be punished? Yes.
If a child is punished for doing wrong is it likely to do wrong again? No.
After Confession does the Priest give you some prayers to say, or some good works to do for your sins? Yes.
What is this called? A Penance.
Why does the Priest give a Penance for your sins?
To teach me not to commit sin again.
Is sin an injury to God? Yes.
Ought we to satisfy God for the injury we have done him by sin? Yes.
How can we satisfy him? By doing Penance.
What is Satisfaction?
Doing the Penance given by the Priest at Confession.
If you have injured any one in his goods or his character, are you obliged to make amends? Yes.

THE MONASTERY OF PENANCE.

S. JOHN CLIMACUS, during his journey in Egypt, came to a certain monastery. "I saw there," he says, "such sights as the eye of the slothful man never saw, the ear of the idle never heard of, and the heart of the coward never thought of.

"In that monastery they always fasted on bread and water for their sins. Some of them stood upright all the night in the

open air. When sleep tempted them they drove it away and reproached themselves for their cowardice. Some, with their eyes lifted up to heaven, and with a sorrowful voice, called upon God to have mercy on them. Others stood with their hands tied behind their backs, as if they were great criminals. They did not dare to lift up their eyes to Heaven, but remained silent. Others placed on sackcloth and ashes, hid their heads betwixt their knees or beat their forehead against the ground. You might see others striking their breasts, and thinking of the happy days before they had sinned. Others there were who watered the ground with their tears. Some cried aloud that they were unworthy of pardon, but prayed that God would punish them in this world, and save them from eternal torments in the world to come. They were so humbled and so bent down under their sins, that the very stones might have pitied them. No laughter was ever heard amongst them. There was no vain-glory or pride seen. There was no care about their body, what they should eat or drink, or what was pleasant to the taste. Even the desire of these things was no longer in their heart. They thought about nothing but their sins and death. Will God forgive us, they cried, has he heard our prayers? How will it be with us in the last moment of our lives? will the gates of Heaven be opened to us?

"It was a terrible sight when the death of any of them was at hand. When any of those blessed penitents saw that any of their companions was about to quit the world, they gathered round him. In a sorrowful and compassionate voice they said to him, 'O dear brother and companion of our labours and penances, how do you find yourself? what are your thoughts now? have you a firm hope of your salvation? do you hear in your soul a voice which says *thy sins are forgiven thee*, or do you hear a terrible voice saying the wicked shall be punished in Hell. Tell us sincerely how you are that we may know how we shall be when death comes, for the time of your penance is now finished.' To these questions some answered by thanking God for his great mercies, others, frightened at the sight of the terrible judgment of God, which was coming near, showed greater sorrow than ever for their sins.

"As for me," says St. John Climacus, "when I had seen and heard all these things, I was near falling into despair, for I remembered how little my own penance had been. I remained there for a month. Then I left the monastery, feeling that I was unworthy of the company of these holy penitents."

Children may learn from this history what a terrible thing a sin is. They may learn also to be very careful about doing the little penances they get at Confession.

* S. Alphonsus Homo, ap. Tract Ulo. No. 38. Penitentia pueris levis sit quantum fieri potest, et curandum quod ila ab ipsis quantocius in pleatur alioquin aut eam obliviscentur aut omittent.

HOW A CHILD MAKES ITS CONFESSION.

The child goes to the Confessional where the Priest is. It kneels down. Then it makes the *Sign of the Cross.* Then it says, *Pray, Father, give me your blessing, for I have sinned.* After this it says, "I confess to Almighty God, to Blessed Mary ever Virgin, to Blessed Michael the Archangel, to Blessed John the Baptist, to the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and to all the saints, that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word, and deed -- through my fault -- through my fault -- through my most grievous fault. Then the child says -- *since my last confession, which was a week or a month since* (the child says how long it is since), *when I received absolution* (*or did not receive absolution*) *I accuse myself of* -- here the child tells each of its sins against the commandments of God or the Church. If the child committed a mortal sin, it must tell how many times it committed the mortal sin. When the child has confessed all its sins, it says -- *For these and all my other sins, which I cannot at present call to mind, I am heartily sorry, purpose amendment, and humbly beg pardon and absolution of you, my ghostly Father*," Then the child says, "Therefore, I beseech the Blessed Mary ever Virgin, Blessed Michael the Archangel, Blessed John the Baptist, the holy apostles Peter and Paul, and all the saints to pray to the Lord our God for me."

After this, the child listens attentively to the advice the Priest gives to it. It takes great notice what Penance the Priest gives. Then while the Priest is giving it Absolution, it makes another Act of Contrition. The child goes away and returns thanks to God, and takes care afterwards to do its Penance as soon as it can.